

[W. H. Criswell]

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Folkstuff - Life History FOLKWAYS

Lettie DeGraffenreid

McLennan County

District #8 Pioneer History

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page 1 W. H. CRISWELL, early pioneer of Central Texas.

REFERENCE: Sketch written by Mrs. W. H. Schneider, daughter.

W. H. Criswell was born June 27, 1850 in Falls county, and lived all of his life in this and McLennan County. When a young man, he taught school in Falls Co., and the school now located on the same site bears his name. He was married on Nov. 25, 1875 to Miss Clarotte Wilder.

Mr. Criswell was the first pioneer in the town of Mart. Coming with his young wife to this locality just one year after his marriage, he built a little log house on the prairie only a few feet from where the Criswell home now stands. The logs, of which his cabin was made, were cut and [hewn?] by his own hands. Here amid the wild flowers of the prairie, he and his young wife worked and saved until a few years later a better home was built. Day after day he would be away in the field from sun-up until sun-down and the only thing to

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break the silence for the girl wife would be the howl of the wolk or [?] or occasionally to prepare a meal for some tired cattleman who would come that way.

In 1877, a tiny baby boy came ti fill their lives to over-flowing. Just a year before a baby girl had come into their home only long enough to give them the joy of parent-hood, dying and leaving their hearts desolate. Their little son was the first white child to be born in Mart. Later, three other baby girls were added to the family, one of which joined the first-born in death, at the age of one year. The boy and girls grew into manhood and womanhood, and lived in the same block with their parents, until the death of the father.

In 1901, the present railroad town was built on Mr. Criswell's farm. The business part of town was laid out in a field of corn. One of the streets C12 2/11/41 Texas 2 FOLKWAYS

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of the town bears his name. He was offered the honor of being the town's first mayor, but being of a ritiring nature, he declined this offer. Mr. Criswell was a good citizen, a considerate neighbor and a true friend. Fearless in his convictions, he was true to his conscience regardless of consequences. A man of positive character, yet one of the tenderest and most affectionate of husbands and fathers. His aim in life was to lend a helping hand to one in need. He cared for two young men (perfect strangers) one having lost an arm in a gin, the other contracting typhoid fever within a week after he had been

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hired to work on the farm. He and his wife nursed them both back to health, without expecting or receiving remuneration.

He lived in a "House by the Side of the Road", and was a friend to man, this poem by S. W. Foss was found among many others in his card case after his death, which occurred on September 21, 1917.